

inmission

the magazine of cmsireland



rumours of light reaching unseen spaces

Issue 72 **Winter 2022**

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equipping the church in mission

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our people

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DR Congo

Dioceses of Bukavu, Kindu & N. Kivu

Egypt (with Ethiopia & North Africa)

Province of Alexandria

Kenya

Diocese of Kajiado; Urban Development Programme, Nairobi

Nepal

Human Development Community Services; SD Church

Rwanda

Dioceses of Kibungo & Shyogwe

South Sudan

Dioceses of Ibba, Kajokeji, Maridi, Olo & Yei

Uganda

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reaching unseen spaces

Twenty years ago, standing in London's National Gallery as an A Level art student, I was entranced by a painting. This work was bigger and more imposing than anything I had seen before, and not just because of its physical size. Almost entirely shrouded in darkness, my eyes took some time to adjust to see what was being conveyed on the canvas.

Gradually, as I slowly acclimatised to the expanse of browns and blacks, I began to see rumours of light emanating from the bottom left corner to the furthest points of the piece. The light source was almost entirely obscured by the bodies and faces of adult frames bowing over it – yet reach around these bodies the light did. What captivated me was that nothing escaped the effects of this child's light. Though easy to over-look or dismiss as oppressively dark, the environment was touched in the most gentle and beautiful of ways, if you only took the time to stop and look. Such painstaking shaping of mirky oil paint had resulted in the most subtle expression of joy and hope that I had ever seen.

It is so easy to look at the darkness and miss the rumours of light all around. Our default position is to fixate on the dominant shade, yet what is so surprising about light is that so little can go so far.

In this issue of *inMission* we will be picking up on this aspect of our annual theme – the rumours of God's light that reach unseen spaces. Read about the spreading of God's light from Burundi to Uganda, as people are quietly living out a faithful witness in their daily lives. Look carefully at the missional women in D R Congo, South Sudan and Egypt, who participate in the emanation of God's light in previously unnoticed ways. Read of the ways in which the light of God's people in the Province of Alexandria can help us to see things more clearly here, at home.

As you explore these pages, may you be inspired to see the image of God in a new way this Advent, in people and places you may not have thought to look before, and may this help dispel some of the darkness within each of us.



Emma Lutton
Editor



rumours of light

The opening of John's gospel provides some of the richest poetry in all literature. As a former English teacher, I am drawn back time and time again to the complex layering of metaphor as John urges us to begin to conceptualise this miracle of miracles – God made flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

As we move into this season of Advent, these words will resound in churches all around the world. Each year I fear that familiarity will prevent me from witnessing the wonder that is the incarnation. We sanitise Jesus' birth. We make the stable clean. We allow Mary and Joseph to knock on a few doors and trundle away, only to be quickly housed in a warm barn with friendly animals who look on in wonder, all the while

providing a comfortable path for me to tread as I traverse the nine lessons and carols.

And yet, when we stop to truly hear what John is saying – that Jesus was fully God and fully human – it is mind blowing. What an audacious claim! The metaphors employed only begin to aid us in the imaginative leap needed to conceive of this wondrous event.

When we are told in Genesis that God created humanity in God's own image, we struggle to comprehend what this might mean. However, to be made in God's image after the birth of Christ, allows us to glimpse the Holy in another way. Instead of sully God by our messy bodies, these bodies are lifted up. The inherent worth of every single human being is reaffirmed through this act of God connecting with us in such a visceral way. Perhaps we should consider Jesus as the most fully human-being that ever lived – the true Imago Dei who walked the earth.

Such a wonder prompts me to pause.

While I find myself struggling to grasp the theology of the image of God in every person and the image of Christ in his followers, and the ways in which the incarnation fundamentally changes our understanding of God, I cannot help but ask a more basic question. If we all bear the mark of something special, separating us from the rest of the material world, then why are so many people forgotten? When war and famine rip through many of our partner countries, how should those of us who are safe and comfortable respond? Do we see God in the faces of those who are weak and vulnerable or do we look away because it's uncomfortable?

What I have found most interesting since joining the CMSI team is that when we come close to those who suffer in the bodily sense, though uncomfortably aware of our own unwarranted privilege, it is there that we are

"Jesus was the most fully human-being that ever lived – the true Imago Dei who walked the earth."

permitted to glimpse the face of the divine. In the forgotten places, though we may initially see only darkness, there are rumours of God's divine light.

The title of Gideon Heugh's collected poems, *Rumours of Light*, inspired this edition of *inMission*. Keeping with the layering of metaphor so loved by the apostle John, the phrase 'rumours of light' conveys that hope is 'lingering beneath the dark horizon; the hallowed spark hiding within the folds of night'. This tentative light that can so easily be missed when darkness seems to dominate is wondrous to behold. To borrow another of Heugh's phrases, we witness 'the breath of wonder poised above our aching souls' when the light of God shines out from the lives of those we might otherwise overlook. Reverberating back, speaking into our darkest places, this light helps to illuminate and irradiate the ugliness within each of us. It is with the help of others' light, then, that we can share in God's life-giving, living light.

Recently I have been reading Walter Brueggemann's book *Sabbath as Resistance*. In this work he calls us to a radical resistance against our culture of now. The 'me-centred', consumer-driven West leaves little time to meet with God. In this run up to Christmas, when we will be so tempted to overspend, overeat, overindulge in a multitude of ways, may we stop. May we stop and linger on the rumours of light in the furthest parts of God's global church for it is there that we will meet with our creator God.



Emma Lutton
Communications Coordinator

hidden sparks

Image: Bukavu MU Mama Veneranda with trauma group

Nameless wives accompanied their CMS missionary husbands into the most difficult of circumstances, for the sake of the gospel. In the early nineteenth century, in Church Mission Society records, the only thing that marks these women as part of the mission is a lower case 'm' beside the name of their husbands (Cathy Ross 2022). Each one a barely glimpsed light, undiminished by lack of recognition:

"the hallowed spark hiding within the folds of the night."

Gideon Heugh

As part of Kingdom Voices week, many of our Global Partner Bishops visited Ireland with their spouses. While SAMS Ireland booked interpreters for their participants, I moved towards a half-decision that the logistics of providing interpreters for our varied language groups was too complex. "After all," I said, "their husbands will be able to translate for them". Ironically and devastatingly, it was during the Gender Based Violence seminar that I realised the implications of my acquiescence to a way of thinking that I would rather not own.

During that seminar, MU Ireland set out their campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence: 'No more One in Three'. This name reflects the proportion of women in Ireland who are subjected to domestic abuse. The participating women were divided into small groups and, although they struggled to find a common language, discussed the situation in their countries. There emerged a consensus that in some of their communities the number was three in three. But what was more shocking, even than their estimate of the level of violence against women, was the acceptance in their voices and shrugged shoulders that this was the norm. From where they stood, change was unlikely.

Image: Mama Veneranda heads up the MU in Bukavu



My sloppy decision, to make these women depend on their husbands for interpretation, revealed not only how my thinking is influenced by our patriarchal history but also the knowledge that in our patriarchal present only 49% of countries around the world have achieved gender parity at primary level education. This drops to 24% by the time children reach year 11 (Girls' education | UNICEF). The apparent inability to imagine societal change concerning violence against women, amongst the small group gathered at the conference, reflects no lack in them. Rather it reflects the impact of a world system that prioritises men and denies women a sense of agency.

"Women are familiar with approaches that are hidden, less recognised and rarely celebrated. We all need to recover these perspectives in our missiology, not just women."

It was a number of weeks later, when attending Cathy Ross of CMS Britain's Global Connections: Without Faces webinar, that another light was shone on the systemic oppression of women in mission, a system in which I had unwittingly played a part. Cathy helped illuminate spaces within these dark folds of gender-based oppression, where our faith beckons us to look for the hallowed spark of light among women in mission. Her webinar inspired much of this article, most particularly when she suggested four missiologies with which women have responded to the situation in which they find themselves:

- A Missiology of Emptiness and Hiddenness
- A Missiology of Comforting, Consolation and Healing
- A Missiology of Hospitality and Relationship
- A Missiology of Sight, Embrace and Flourishing

Caution is required when trying to summarise such a vast area of thinking in so brief a time. This is compounded by the complication that each of the above responses to gender-based oppression has the potential to perpetuate negative gender stereotypes, pushing the rumours of light emanating from women in mission even further into the night.

However, let me share with you some stories in an attempt to honour the ways in which women have shone God's light despite the darkness in which they find themselves. Meet first Pastor Alice. She told me her story of traumatic journeying from South Sudan to Rhino refugee camp in Northern Uganda. In her emptiness and hiddenness, in contrast to our world of envisioning and risk assessing, her life reminded me that God bids us to take up



our cross and follow him. Almost as soon as she had gathered together a temporary home for her family, Pastor Alice put all her resources and efforts into mobilising the community to build a place of worship. Eight hidden years later she pastors six parishes in Rhino camp, as a light bearer, for fellow refugees on the same bitter journey.

Mama Mbambu shares a rumour of light when reflecting and responding to her own need for comfort, consolation and healing after a painful childhood by becoming a comforter and carer for over sixty children traumatised by loss in the war in Butembo, Eastern Congo. The same light sits with Mama Fidea, recently moved to Uvira in the upcoming Diocese of Lac Tanginika (D RC), who, with little design or plan, has gathered around her children similarly impacted by local violence. Perhaps these women can illuminate for us a missional God who longs to gather his people under his wings (Luke 13 v 34), broadening an understanding of God beyond the images of one who crusades.

Image: Pastor Alice



Can Bonita, who walks the line between mission-guest of the church in Egypt, and mission-host to Sudanese students at the Nuba Mountain Bible Institute, light up for us a fresh path for mission in hospitality and relationship? She tells how women pastors can visit new believers in communities where conversion to Christ is forbidden. She tells how becoming a guest makes a safe space for discipleship and encouragement. Might consideration of the roles of host and guest bring new light to how we behave in CMSI global partnerships? Jay Matenga (2022) speaks of the tension between the industrial and indigenous voice in mission. He says: "without the indigenous voice the church cannot grow or mature." How can we be the listening guest of other parts of the church? Might the hallowed spark of a more relational, hospitable missiology bring us closer to reconciling the power imbalances imprinted on our relationships within the global church?

And lastly, again in Eastern Congo, there glows the almost imperceptible light of the women who see and embrace each other in the Mothers' Union in Bukavu. They see their own trauma mirrored in the eyes of other 'three in three' woman. Yet they glow more brightly, having the clarity of vision to see and embrace the men incarcerated in woeful conditions in the local prison. They bring them food, medicines and the word of truth and hope. This is a hallowed spark of mission in the dark folds of personal trauma and national chaos.

Image: Mama Mbambu with new arrivals March 2022

There are many hidden mission workers, many hallowed sparks shining amongst oppressive political regimes and restrictive cultures. Their invisibility is not just about lack of access to their stories. Their invisibility is ensured by systems that assign their points of view and their models of mission as being merely back-up to the powerful, outspoken, goal focused approaches that are often seen as the 'real work' of mission.

"Women are familiar with approaches that are hidden, less recognised and rarely celebrated. We all need to recover these perspectives in our missiology, not just women."

(Cathy Ross 2022)

As we move through this season, we recall that shepherds spread the word about the Saviour in swaddling clothes and wise men hailed him as the King. But it was Mary who carried the most hallowed spark through nights of controversy and shame, through the long journey to the prophesied place of his birth and quietly stored up in her heart the treasured words of those who understood the hallowed light that she safely delivered into the world. Her mission started with her quiet pledge: "I am the Lord's servant" (Luke 1:38). Where might we rethink our missional approaches with a fresh perspective from the hidden sparks of the global church?



Linda Abwa
Partnership Coordinator

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Cathy Ross "When women speak: missiologies of resistance and flourishing." Unpublished transcript for Global Connections 'Without faces' Webinar, 21 Sept 2022.

Jay Matenga, "Indigenous Implications For The Future Wellbeing of Missions" www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUD6lFK1BpM



marketplace

trading crafts, sharing stories



Participate in the refracted light of God's global church here, at home, by hosting a Marketplace craft stall.

Listen to the rumours of light by hearing the stories of our crafters.

lives of these individuals. As well as selling their crafts, Marketplace seeks to share their stories.

Marketplace is an initiative of CMS Ireland that promotes a wide range of homemade craft from Africa and Asia and shares the stories of those who make these products.

There are two ways to be involved with Marketplace:

- **Book a Marketplace presentation.** A CMS Ireland staff member or volunteer will set up a Marketplace stall and share some of the stories behind the crafts and videos of the craft makers as well as looking at the techniques the craft makers use. This is an ideal presentation for a mid-week gathering, mission event or Mothers' Union meeting in your church.
- **Book a Marketplace craft stall.** The stall can be set-up and run at a coffee morning or craft fair. A range of products will be prepared on a 'sale or return' basis.

"Whether it is gifts, Sunday School prizes, wedding favours or a treat for yourself, Marketplace has something for everyone."

Running since 2004, Marketplace has been championing crafters and selling produce from some of CMS Ireland's Global Partners in Kenya, Nepal, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. These include groups who are HIV positive, those living with disabilities and those taking part in community health programmes.

The craft-makers are often from the margins of society and are being helped by the local church in real, practical ways. Selling crafts to Marketplace makes a tangible difference in the

Contact the office on 02890775020
or 014970931 if you would like to
find out more.



imago Dei

image bearers in Uganda

Seeing the image of God

It was a long and arduous journey to a small ill kept village home. Nankya saw the battered pickup approaching and as it halted, watched Jajja Nightingale manoeuvre herself out of the vehicle and make her way slowly up the muddy path. Nankya, despite her cerebral palsy, beamed and, squealing, flung herself chaotically down the path towards her friend. I watched, wondering. Nankya, in a filthy, ragged dress was covered in dirt and flies. Her spasticity, poor coordination and delayed development hindered her every movement, her speech, self-care, continence and her ability to learn. Jajja Nightingale held out her arms and embraced Nankya. Giggling they moved up the path together. Would I have looked beyond the filth and smell, the fear of

contamination, of disease, and welcomed this child of God with such an embrace?

'Then God said 'Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness... So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.'
Gen 1:26,27

Jajja Nightingale, with great intentionality, sought out Nankya. She understood that each person is of unique value because they are created in the image of God, that God has displayed something of himself in each of his creatures and that, as we refuse to look away, we will discover something more of our creator even in the most unlikely people.



Being the image of God

In the northwest of Uganda, there is a dusty border town. Koboko is where loaded lorries stop on their way to South Sudan. It is also a multi-ethnic place where many folk have found a temporary home because they have been forced to flee from conflict in DR Congo and South Sudan. Family structures have been disrupted and community bonds broken. Lots of the young people are struggling with issues of insecurity, cultural identity and loss. An unlikely young man has sensed a call from God to minister in this complex, fractured space. Familiar himself with loss of home, family and country, with the struggle to gain an education in a land fraught by war, he testifies to the power of prayer and to the love

of his Father God. Visiting the small, rented office of Save Life Ministries and hearing about the wide range of outreach activities, skills training programmes, radio broadcasts and home visits, it is surprising to find that such an unassuming, quiet young man is responsible for all these well organised, impressive and effective missional activities. It is clear that God is at work, that God's Image is shining through him.

'In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven'
Matthew 5:16



"...as we refuse to look away, we will discover something more of our creator even in the most unlikely people"

Speaking the image of God

Involvement in dark places is risky, challenging and often costly. It is hard to predict where involvement might lead; hard to know what might be required, for how long and how much. It is easier to walk away. A surprising opportunity presented itself to Bishop Ivan. Quite unexpectedly he was invited to represent the Ugandan church leaders in giving a 10-minute talk to explain the church position on the death penalty. The Ugandan government has prepared a bill to abolish the death penalty, but it awaits the presidential signature. Bishop Ivan's task was a tricky one. He was to present the talk to a delegation of local and international human rights representatives, government ministers and prison authorities; to people of other faiths and of none. The talk was to take place inside the maximum-security wing of Luzira Prison, in the presence of around 270 inmates on death row. A challenging assignment but a golden opportunity for the gospel in a very dark place. He started his talk by recognising that in 1994 the World Council of Churches declared its support to abolish of the death penalty. He went on to explain that in God's word we read that everyone has done things that they should not have done, that everyone

has regrets - whether we are in Luzira or walking around outside - but also that we are all created in God's image whatever our current state. He spoke of a God of love who longs for people to be reconciled to one another and to himself, and that it is God who is the final judge. A just and merciful judge. In this unexpected opportunity Bishop Ivan shone Christ's light into a very dark corner to bring enlightenment both to people who had little hope and to those who rarely hear the Christian message.

As members of the church we have an extraordinary responsibility, a responsibility to display the image of Christ in our attitudes and in all we say and do. As followers of Christ we also have an extraordinary calling, a calling to go out to those who appear besmirched and broken and to find the image of Christ in them too.

'Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven'

1 Cor 15:49



Jenny Smyth
Mission Director



literacy

lighting the path for women in Burundi

"By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path."
(Psalm 119:105)

One of many stand-out experiences for me during the Kingdom Voices programme in August this year was a 30 minute small-group meeting at the start of the Global Partners' Conference day at Tobar Mhuire Retreat Centre, Crossgar. Our 36 visiting guests were divided into mixed groups of 5 or 6 for fellowship, bible reflection and prayer. In my group there was a delegate from Nepal, a South American Bishop and his wife, and a couple from Burundi – Bishop Aimé Joseph and Madame Bénigne Kimararungu from the diocese of Gitega.



It was a beautiful time of sharing where the need to listen closely to each other was brought into stark relief due to the range of different cultures, different mother-tongues, and – in Madame Bénigne's case – the need for translation into her first language of Kirundi.

Reflecting on the bible passage we were studying, group members were asked to share a simple story from their home church that would encourage the others in the group. A number of exciting stories were shared in English and each one was translated phrase by phrase into Kirundi for Mme Bénigne by her husband, but she herself had not yet spoken. I then asked if she would like to share something. There was a long pause, followed by the most gentle contribution so far, which Bishop Aimé Joseph translated – phrase by quietly spoken phrase – back into English. As we listened, it was like a curtain being drawn back and light came flooding in!

"I am the President of the Mothers' Union in Gitega Diocese," she began, "and we have around 1,200 members. Many of the women in our rural areas cannot read or write, and they are struggling to make ends meet as they bring up their children. Back in 2004 the Mothers' Union started a Women's Literacy Programme, and although we worked hard, the needs were huge and there were many areas we could not reach. In 2020 CMSI supported us with funds from the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal, which enabled us to buy educational materials and pay for training and transport so that 16 more facilitators from the archdeaconries of Nyabitsinda and Kabanga could be upskilled. We planned that these 16 would then train up a further 320 women over the next year, but in fact they have so far reached 461 participants – including 82 men!

We now have a total of 100 trained facilitators throughout the diocese, and each one is running a 12-month literacy and business skills class with around 20 participants in their local area. The programme is not only focussed on reading and writing, however: we call it *The Literacy Programme based on Development*. We aim to empower participants in order to achieve positive change in both physical and spiritual aspects of life, so the lessons include training in savings and credit skills and small business skills. Cross-cutting issues such as gender-based violence, the environment and matters of faith are also discussed.

Image: Teaching materials were distributed and transported to the Literacy Centres – blackboards, chalk, registers and calculators



The groups are working amazingly well, with around 2,000 women currently being trained. Many of these women are now able to earn their own income, which helps provide school uniforms, books and other essentials for their children, as well as increasing their offerings to the church. As they grow in self-confidence, the levels of gender-based violence are going down and the Kingdom of God is being extended too. This is because the programme is open to all in the community and there are some members who have benefitted so much that they are coming to faith and joining the church."

Having only recently taken on the role of Partnership Coordinator for Burundi, I found this testimony wonderfully encouraging. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, Burundi is the 3rd poorest country in the world - ranked 185 out of 188 countries - with lack of education being one of the key issues contributing to this figure. Rates of illiteracy for those over 15 years of age are men at 23.7% and women at 38.8%. This is reflected in the literacy rates surveyed by the Mothers' Union leaders in Gitega, with a third of their members unable to read or write at all. Functional literacy is recognised as a key to economic development alongside basic finance management skills. As women are usually responsible for managing the daily household requirements for the family, these essential

Image: Top - Bishop Aimé Joseph with 6 Diocesan trainers and 16 volunteer trainees after completing a 16-day course on how to teach Literacy. Bottom - Roger Thompson with Madame Bénigne and Bishop Aimé Joseph.

skills are of paramount importance. But with only 13% of the population living in urban areas, it is harder to reach those who need this support. If women are to access literacy and business skills these classes must be delivered in rural areas.

"the Light of God's Word - as well as the Light of Literacy - illuminating every aspect of people's lives"

This means that the grass roots network of the Diocesan Mothers' Union in Gitega is ideally placed to reach out to some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people on the planet. Because of the longstanding partnership CMSI has developed with the diocese, link parishes and Bishops Appeal are able to offer support and prayers through a locally led initiative that is highly effective and at a minimal cost. This is truly the transforming love of Christ in action, an example of the Light of God's Word - as well as the Light of Literacy - illuminating every aspect of people's lives. As it says in Psalm 119, "By your words I can see where I'm going; they throw a beam of light on my dark path"



Roger Thompson
Partnership Coordinator



lighting the way for us

CITI students in The Province of Alexandria

Have you ever travelled outside your comfort zone and learned something new about God and his Church in the process?

Ord. Daniel Fleming and Rev. Timothy Eldon, two Church of Ireland Theological Institute students, had the opportunity earlier this year to spend time in the Province of Alexandria. Daniel was in Egypt for one month just after Easter while Timothy spent 6 weeks in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria during the summer. As these two men prepare for full-time parish ministry and continue their training, their placements and opportunities to minister alongside the global church have been life changing.

At the start of October, Daniel shared about his experiences at CMSI's monthly online prayer room. He told us how the Church in Egypt is very vocal, with people openly sharing their faith and valuing the power of prayer, even in the face of opposition. Despite being in the minority, followers of Jesus in Egypt have their attention fully focused on God and bringing the light of Christ into communities. Their faith is vibrant, living, dynamic, compellingly conveying a whole-life engagement with Christ which goes far beyond merely sitting



through a Sunday service. As a community of believers, they are a living embodiment of the light of Christ in both word and deed.

It seems that Daniel's visit to Cairo was very much in God's timing. The churches in Egypt follow the calendar of the Coptic Church and so Daniel had the privilege of celebrating Easter twice in 2022! He also had the opportunity to shadow our partners as they continue to build bridges between Christians and Muslims, facilitating ongoing dialogue. As part of this process of Christian-Muslim cooperation, a group from the Church were invited to Al-Azhar Mosque and university. At the end of the meeting, Daniel and others attended an Iftar meal (breaking the Ramadan fast) and visited the square of Al-Azhar Mosque to learn about its history and take photos with the Grand Imam. Daniel even got to meet Ireland's ambassador to Egypt.

During his time there, the Church also opened a new centre for Christian-Muslim Understanding and Partnership which Bishop Mouneer has spearheaded. Islamic and Christian people coming together to work for justice and peace in our world, a world which is so full of uncertainty, is truly fantastic. Our partners in Egypt are a brilliant example to

"What would it look like if we took every church meeting as an opportunity for fellowship over food? Possibly shorten this to 'fellowship over food?'"

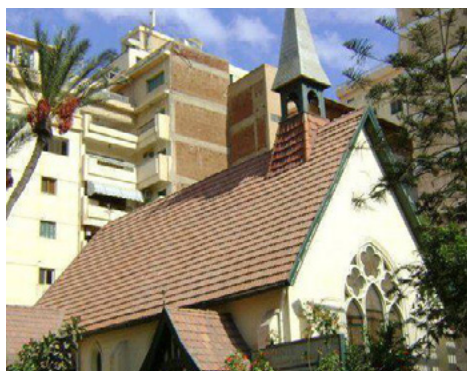
us all in their crossing of cultural and social boundaries, in their seeking to break down stereotypes and barriers. These people, in shining the light of Christ, are convinced it is influencing them for good and preparing their hearts to open up to the work of God's Spirit.

Though on the same landmass, Timothy had a very different experience. He spent a good part of his time in some of the poorer neighbourhoods of Alexandria learning from Rev. Mina and Dean David Aziz in All Saints Church, Stanley. Timothy reflected that the Church in Egypt practices the 'Ministry of Presence'. They don't wait for people to come to them, they go to the people – they feed the poor, heal the sick and injured, and give up their days off to reach the lost in their country in ways that are very different to models of evangelism we often see here in Ireland.

Timothy writes:

"Alexandria is a busy place, filled with bustling, tooting traffic rushing past posh looking clothes shops (which are many) while a multitude of street traders sell everything from y-fronts to cactus fruit on the pavements in front. At first glance Egypt seems like a very competitive place, as everyone tries to eke out their living. But this is also a place of hospitality."

The hospitality of the churches in Alexandria has been one of the things I've found very striking. In the gospels we never have to read very far to find Jesus and the disciples sitting down to eat something, and it is the same with the churches in Alexandria. They never miss an opportunity to share food together. Whether it is the midweek Bible study, service of evening prayer or the main communion service, there is always an extended social time over some sandwiches and coffee afterwards. The Alexandrian example gives me cause to wonder too, whether we shouldn't be aiming for more than a polite cup of tea and a slice of tart on a special occasion. What would it look like if we took every church meeting as an opportunity for fellowship over food? Perhaps we might start to get a little more of a glimpse of what it will be like at the wedding feast of the Lamb when we share in the Father's glory."



The Church's involvement in the community, their knowledge of scripture and deep rootedness in theology which is intertwined throughout all their services is humbling, challenging, convicting and inspiring.

Timothy and Daniel both recognise that persecution is real and that believers in Egypt have been faithful under pressure. The faith of these men and woman has been tested and tried, and they are not afraid to face hardship or suffering in bearing the name of Christ. Indeed, Daniel and Timothy's experiences attest to the fact that political unrest and insecurity has caused the Church and the faith of God's people to grow. It has opened opportunities for deeper discussion around belief and injustice.

With such a testimony witnessed and shared by two of our own trainee clerics, there are some difficult and challenging questions for each of us to answer. This advent season may we start by asking ourselves if Jesus is more important to us than our own personal safety and comfort? And how might we learn from the Egyptian branch of God's global church to selflessly love and share the light of Christ in our communities?



Gillian Maganda
Personnel Manager

snippets

cmsi news in brief



Prayer Room

The next meeting of the Prayer Room will be on Wednesday 7th December at 1pm on zoom. The focus of our gathering will be on Shyogwe, Rwanda. If you haven't signed up yet, remember to register beforehand to ensure you get access to the CMSI prayer room zoom link.

Please note that there will be no prayer room January. We will resume again on Wednesday 1st February, same time, same place.



Kilimanjaro trek raises £2,500!

Congratulations to Olwen and Ian Laird on reaching the top of Mount Kilimanjaro – Olwen's childhood dream! Olwen serves on CMSI's Audit Committee and is a member of St John's Moira. Their trek raised a phenomenal £2,500 towards the parish link with Ibba Diocese in South Sudan. What a feat, on every front!

Olwen:

'I think it was the toughest thing either of us have ever done – but we got a great photo!'



An Extra Guest

Christmas - a season of celebration, a time for friends and family, for feasting and hosting, for generous giving.

At this time of year, it's often remarked that amidst the parties and presents, we can easily take our eyes off the greatest gift, the Word Made Flesh. But there's another related risk to our festivities: we can lose sight of those, in our own communities and across the world, for whom life is far from a celebration. Those who have little opportunity for feasts and laughter.

To help each of us reach out, beyond the boundaries of our own homes and families, we are offering an opportunity for you to include An Extra Guest at your dinner table this year. To find out more read the enclosed leaflet or visit our website.



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Do you shop online? If so, you can support CMSI's Mission Resource Fund at no extra cost to yourself. easyfundraising is a scheme involving nearly 3000 popular retailers. As you shop online with these retailers, they make a donation to CMSI...and it costs you nothing!



www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/churchmissionsocietyireland/



Crops failing through drought N Uganda

COP27

"Humanity has a choice: cooperate or perish. It is either a Climate Solidarity Pact – or a Collective Suicide Pact". This statement was declared by the UN Secretary-General at the beginning of the UN Climate Change Conference. In the wake of COP27 it is more urgent than ever that we stand in solidarity with our partners as they face the impacts of climate change and as they work creatively to mitigate damage to their land and their communities.

In the light of the stark reality that our actions leave a lasting mark on this planet, we must also pause to reflect. While many of us face financial challenges this coming winter, may we remember the 5th Mark of Mission: to treasure God's earth. We have a responsibility to carefully consider our own life choices so that we live more lightly, care for the environment more tenderly and search diligently for solutions.



Belfast Climate Rally, November 2021



An Extra Guest

CMSI Christmas Appeal

2022

Bringing the global church into the heart of your celebrations

Dublin

Church of Ireland House, Church Ave, Rathmines, Dublin D06 CF67
Tel +353 (0) 1497 0931 **Email** dublinoffice@cmsireland.org

Belfast

Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park, 245a Upper Malone Road,
Belfast BT17 9LA
Tel +44 (0) 28 9077 5020 **Email** belfastoffice@cmsireland.org

 [@cmsireland](https://twitter.com/cmsireland)  facebook.com/cmsireland

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